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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MFA ADVISOR DISCUSSES SHANGHAI
COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

11. (SBU) Summary: In a discussion with Poloff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Advisor for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Yerlan Shamishev stated that the SCO has a broad mandate and serves an important purpose because it solidifies links between Central Asian member states and Russia and China. He admitted, however, that the SCO's concrete accomplishments are few. The SCO is interested in Afghanistan, he said, but has yet to turn interest into action. Kazakhstan is not interested in a more developed role in the SCO for Iran. End Summary.

2, (SBU) On October 8, Poloff met with Yerlan Shamishev, Ministry Foreign Affairs Advisor for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to discuss Kazakhstan's view of the SCO. When asked to describe the aims of the SCO, Shamishev responded that the SCO has a broad mandate. Security cooperation has been the most successful component of the SCO, he said, but fostering further economic cooperation is now an increasingly important goal for the SCO. Humanitarian cooperation is also an element. The SCO does not wish to be confrontational, he added.

13. (SBU) Poloff asked Shamishev to describe major accomplishments of the SCO. Shamishev answered that the greatest accomplishment of the SCO has been to "uphold a spirit of political unity" and to build trust between the four Central Asian member states and China and Russia. He confessed, however, that on "concrete outputs" it is "hard to find good success stories."

14. (SBU) Shamishev also admitted that trying to strengthen economic cooperation through the SCO has proven difficult. Uzbekistan is reluctant to open its borders and has not been particularly cooperative, he said. Generally, according to Shamishev, Uzbekistan is comfortable discussing security issues and is disinclined to address other issues. Kyrgyzstan and Tadjikistan, in contrast, are more willing to cooperate economically but have less potential for investment.

15. (SBU) Poloff asked if Kazakhstan has any concerns of a possible power disbalance in the SCO. Shamishev responded that to some extent two groups have developed in the SCO, with one group comprised of Kazakhstan, China, and Russia because of their size and relative economic might. He noted that these three countries are also the big contributors to SCO, with Russia and China each paying 24% and Kazakhstan 21%. Nevertheless, he insisted that the bigger countries are not in a position to dominate the smaller ones, because each

country has a veto.

¶16. (SBU) Turning to Iran, Shamishev said that Kazakhstan will not seek to increase its cooperation with Iran through the SCO. Iran's nuclear ambitions, he stated, make it very difficult to implement programs and undermine endeavors to develop cooperation on issues like an energy pipeline. "We don't want to escalate the situation between Iran and the international community," said Shamishev.

¶17. (SBU) Shamishev said that achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan is a goal for the SCO. A SCO - Afghanistan contact group exists, focused on confidence-building measures. "All is on paper at this point," he said, "nothing concrete has yet been achieved." Kazakhstan has achieved more progress with Afghanistan bilaterally than through the SCO, he remarked. He also underlined that Kazakhstan understands that any negative spillover from Afghanistan into Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan will also effect Kazakhstan.

¶18. (SBU) Poloff asked Shamishev whether Kazakhstan has been able to use the SCO as a venue to discuss pressing problems of water use in the region. Shamishev answered that Kazakhstan has tried to raise the issue, but without success because of opposition from China and Uzbekistan.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has thus far proven to be more of a talking-shop than an action-driven organization. Nevertheless, the role of the SCO in the region should not be downplayed. The SCO provides another opportunity for regional leaders with similar mindsets on many issues to forge personal links (Presidents Putin and Nazarbayev have met more than fifteen times in the

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last two years) and to reinforce their shared thinking. End
Summary
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